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South St. Louis Family Wrote Congressman Carnahan Earlier This Week Encouraging Him to Continue Fighting for Struggling Families

(ST. LOUIS) - When President Obama delivers his first State of the Union speech in Washington, DC tonight, Congressman Russ Carnahan won't be watching from the floor of the House of Representatives. Instead, Carnahan will watch from the home of a South St. Louis family who recently wrote a letter urging him to keep fighting for families struggling to find employment, keep up with health care bills and plan for a secure retirement.

"The State of the Union is an event of great fanfare and anticipation about what new policies the President will outline," said Carnahan. **"But to me, it's more important to understand how those policies will impact the hard-working people back home who are trying to build a better life for their families."**

In a letter to Congressman Carnahan earlier this week - the first she had ever written to an elected official - area teacher MaryJo Clark shared the challenges her family has faced as our nation begins to rebuild after the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. Her husband, daughter and others in her family are unemployed, and several family members have struggled to find affordable health care coverage in the face of rising costs and discrimination against people with pre-existing conditions.

"I've tried to do my best to be a good citizen. I vote in most elections; I pay my taxes; I've even served on juries. I've tried to be financially responsible. I work for a living; I save some money; I contribute to my retirement plan; I've paid for my house; I don't have credit card debt," wrote MaryJo in her letter. "Yet, despite doing the things I should be doing, I, and my family, have fallen victim to the irresponsible practices of some of our largest financial institutions. Additionally, my daughter and millions of others just like her, have fallen victim to the unnecessary flaws of our current health care system."

"People are sick of the partisan bickering in Washington. The problems they are dealing with are far too serious, and they want solutions," said Carnahan. **"We need to work together to restore the American Dream for middle class families. I am stubbornly optimistic that we can move past the politics of obstructionism in order to do what is**

right for the American people."

Russ Carnahan is a co-sponsor of bipartisan health reform legislation that would allow small businesses to pool their health care coverage for employees to lower costs. Small businesses are the first to create jobs following recession, making it even more important to make health insurance more affordable. Last month, Carnahan voted to help pass a sweeping jobs creation bill out of the U.S. House of Representatives. The Senate has begun work on similar legislation.

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